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WALTER A. HAZEN



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### Dedication

To the memory of my brother, Walton.

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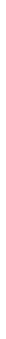
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# Introduction



eople of the time called it the Great War. Before it was over, it would involve about forty nations from around the globe. When it began, spirited soldiers marched proudly off to battle, confident in their leaders' assurances that the war would last only a matter of weeks or months. No one was prepared for a bloody struggle that would last for four years. When it finally did end, people everywhere began referring to it as "the war to end all wars."

The start of World War I should not have surprised anyone. Although the assassination of a member of the Austrian royal family set it off, decades-long distrust and rivalries among nations were the underlying causes. France and Germany had been at odds for decades, and many different peoples in the Balkans were unhappy under the rule of the Ottoman Turks and the Austro-Hungarians. In addition, the nations of Europe were in an arms race, each determined to have a military force second to none. Finally, a race for colonies in Africa and elsewhere only added to the tension. What *is* surprising is that World War I did not break out earlier.

Everyday Life: World War I focuses on the effects the war had on the peoples of Europe and elsewhere. There are battles here, certainly, but they are confined to one chapter. The remaining chapters deal with the lives of soldiers on the battlefronts and civilians on the home fronts. Students will learn what it was like for soldiers to live and fight in muddy trenches, and they will gain an understanding of the hardships and sacrifices faces by civilians at home.

Everyday Life: World War I is unlike most books dealing with the war, and it is a book students should enjoy.

Walter A. Hazen

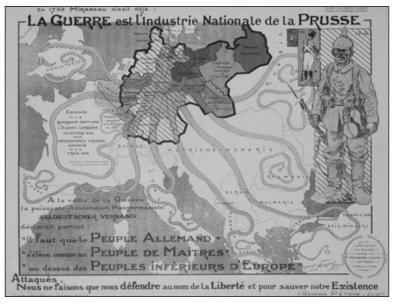


CHAPTER I

# **Background and Causes**

ars are not caused by a single incident that occurs at any particular moment, and that was certainly the case with World War I. The "spark" that set off that war was the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Bosnia on June 28, 1914. However, the causes of the war are more profound and go back many years before that fateful day in 1914.

Perhaps the main cause of World War I was nationalism—pride in one's country. The purest form of nationalism—swelling with pride at seeing your country's flag or hearing your national anthem—is not likely to lead to war. But other forms of nationalism can and have led to war. One example is the case of America in the eighteenth century, when colonists desiring independence fought against Great Britain. When nationalism is taken to extremes, people



"War is the national industry of Prussia." French World War I propoganda poster depicting Prussia as an octopus whose tentacles are reaching into Europe. ca. 1910–20.

develop the feeling that their nation is better than or superior to others. Such a belief has led to armed conflicts since the beginning of written history.

Feelings of nationalism ran high in parts of Europe in the early 1900s. This was particularly true in the Balkans. The Balkans are a group of countries that form a peninsula in southeast Europe that lies between the Adriatic and Black seas. This area includes the present-day countries of Greece, Bulgaria, Albania, and all of what was once Yugoslavia. A small

part of Turkey is also considered part of the area. People of many nationalities live in the region: Greeks, Romanians, Albanians, Turks, and Slavs. Included in the latter group are Serbs, Croats, Macedonians, Bulgarians, and Slovenes.

In the years leading up to World War I, few of the ethnic groups mentioned above enjoyed independence. Most were subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which included the combined monarchies of Austria and Hungary and parts of what are now Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Yugoslavia. Within its borders lived Serbs, Croats, Poles, Czechs, Italians, and Romanians who were unhappy under Austrian rule and wanted to govern themselves.



### Chapter 1 • Background and Causes

Nationalism of a different sort characterized the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire—named for its founder, Osman—was the empire of the Turks. Through the centuries, the Turks had extended their rule over Greece, Albania, and Bulgaria, and they once posed a serious threat to all of Europe. But by the nineteenth century, their empire had begun to fall apart. First, Greece became an independent nation in 1829. Then in 1878, the nations of Serbia, Montenegro, and Romania were carved from the disintegrating empire. Finally, in 1908, Bulgaria became independent, and the Turks were left with only a fraction of their former European holdings. Small wonder that the Ottoman Empire became known as the "sick man of Europe."

Other nations sought to take advantage of the Turks' weakness. Germany wanted to build a railroad from Berlin through the Balkans to Baghdad. Control of the Turkish city of Constantinople would offer Russians the trade port they had long needed. And France, Great Britain, and Austria-Hungary began to cast envious eyes toward the crumbling Turkish Empire. Rivalries among European powers to gain Turkish territory brought the world ever closer to war.

Serbia's ambitions for Turkish land were a case in point. In 1912, Serbia joined Greece, Bulgaria, and Montenegro and attacked the Turks. This was the First Balkan War. Serbia and its allies easily won and divided Macedonia, a region just north of Greece, among themselves. At the same time, Serbia seized Albania. This move greatly alarmed Austria-Hungary. In the eyes of the

Austrians, Serbia was becoming too powerful. Backed by Germany and Italy, Austria-Hungary forced the Serbs to declare Albania an independent nation. Thus a much broader war was averted.

Not long after the end of the First Balkan War, the Bulgarians began claiming that they had been cheated out of land. In 1913 the Second Balkan War broke out when Bulgaria attacked Serbia, and Greece, Turkey, and Romania attacked Bulgaria. Bulgaria was soundly defeated, and Serbia ended up doubling its territory. Austria-Hungary viewed these events with great alarm. What would the Serbs try next?

Farther east and north in Europe, nationalism fueled the flames of distrust among the European powers. France had lost the important province of





U.S. Food Administration educational poster, ca. 1917. Serbia had as much to do with bringing about World War I as any other nation.



Alsace-Lorraine to Germany in 1871, and many of the French were determined to get it back. Such tension led both countries to increase the size of their armies. Germany's buildup of its navy prompted Great Britain to view Germany with distrust.

Compared to the other nations of Europe, Russia was a backward country, but the size of its army was a cause for concern. When World War I broke out, the Russians could place more than six million troops in the field. It mattered little that Russia's minister of war, General Sukhomlinov, frowned on modern tactics and openly boasted that he "had not read a military manual in twenty-five years." It also mattered little that the Russian army was ill-trained and poorly equipped. What did matter was that Russia's army was much larger than that of other European nations, which caused considerable worry in Germany and Austria-Hungary.



Italian mounted infantry in Peking, China, ca. 1900, part of a 19,000-man international expedition sent to China to protect trade rights.

Imperialism was another factor that brought on the war. Imperialism is the policy of strong nations seeking control over weaker ones. In the late nineteenth century, European nations vied for either influence or control of colonies in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. By the end of the century, a handful of European powers had carved up Africa entirely. Africans fought back as best they could, but they were no match for Europeans with modern weapons. Great Britain took control of Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and the Gold Coast. France claimed

Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and the island of Madagascar off Africa's east coast. Germany seized South West Africa and German East Africa. Italy gobbled up Libya, Eritrea, and Italian Somaliland. Not to be outdone, Portugal claimed Guinea, Mozambique, and Angola. Finally, Belgium seized the Congo in the central part of Africa. By the time World War I broke out, rivalries among the European powers for colonies were intense.

In the mid-nineteenth century, these European powers began to look to China for new colonies. Unlike Africa, China had not yet been carved up and taken over by the European powers. Instead, it was divided into spheres of influence. A sphere of influence is an area where a country controlled trade and



### Chapter I • Background and Causes



business. Each European nation had exclusive rights in its part of China. The French, Russians, British, Germans, and Portuguese all reaped profits from their share of Chinese trade. The Japanese also got into the act after defeating China in a brief war. The Chinese, to be sure, resented foreign control and meddling, but their nation was too weak to do anything about it.

Nationalism and the competition for colonies led to ever-increasing mistrust among the nations of Europe. The result of such mistrust was the formation of alliances in the late 1800s and early 1900s. An alliance is an agreement among nations to act together and to help each other. If one nation in an alliance is attacked, the other members are pledged to come to its aid.

Two such alliances were formed. Germany and Austria-Hungary had formed the Dual Alliance in 1879. The primary goal of this alliance was to isolate France from the rest of Europe. In 1870 and 1871, Germany had battled France for Alsace-Lorraine, a region between the two countries. Germany had won, but more than ten years later, its leaders still feared France would seek revenge for the defeat. Italy, a fairly weak nation, also feared the possibility of a French attack, so in 1882 Italy joined Germany and Austria-Hungary in what became known as the Triple Alliance.

The second alliance to appear was the Triple Entente, formed in 1907. *Entente* is a French word meaning a "friendly agreement." The Triple Entente grew out of an alliance formed in 1894 between France and Russia. At the time, France needed an ally and Russia needed money. France granted Russia a loan in return for its help should the Triple Alliance pose a threat. In 1907, Great Britain, fearful of Germany's growing navy, joined the two, creating the Triple Entente.

Europe was now divided into two armed camps. Should any two rival powers "come to blows," all six nations would be drawn into the conflict. Thus Europe was on the brink of world war almost a decade before it actually broke out. All that was needed was a spark to set it off—and that spark occurred in Bosnia in the Balkans in June 1914.



### Chapter 1 • Background and Causes



Name	Date	

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Date

## Write a Letter

Pretend you are living somewhere in Europe in the months leading up to World War I. There is a lot of tension between nations, and you are worried about how your life might be affected if war does break out. Write a letter to a friend expressing your thoughts and feelings.



(Your Name)